Regional Administrator, Alexandra Dunn

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Maine Rural Water and Wastewater Association Annual Conference

Outline for Remarks:

- Introduce yourself
- Importance of strong partnership
- Critical infrastructure- drinking water and waste water—is paramount
- Facing some difficult challenges
- Lead in Drinking Water
    - Developing a New England Get the Lead Out Summit
    - Developing a new tool to assist homeowners
    - WIIN Act Funding
- Emerging Contaminants (PFAS)
    - National issue
    - Held first community engagement event in the country
- Aging infrastructure
    - National issue
    - WIFIA Funding
    - SRF
- EPA is working closely with state and local partners
- We have a lot of work to do and we look forward to working with all of you on these challenges.

Remarks:

- Introduce yourself

- Critical infrastructure like drinking water and waste water systems are vital to all of our health and well being.

- The work you do as operators and distributers of these systems is paramount.

- Together we face a lot of challenges to protect public health and the environment, and I want to talk to you all today about partnerships, and some of the challenges we are working through together.

Lead in Drinking Water

- Aging infrastructure is a real challenge across New England, and lead pipes are something most of our cities and towns are grappling with.

- There is a lot of work being done around the region on this.

- In North Providence, RI, for example- the Mayor innovatively used a HUD Block Grant to help start a lead service line replacement program.

- **EPA Get the Lead Out Summit**

- EPA is going to be holding a New England Get the Lead Out Summit this coming March. We are working closely with our states, water providers and water associations to pull this together.

- We hope that drinking water utility managers, local officials, state regulators and public health professionals will attend and be inspired by innovative solutions and projects happening around the region.

- **New Tool to Assist Homeowners**

- Protect Your Tap: 10-minute lead test in an on-line guide for homeowners to find lead pipes and reduce potential lead risk in drinking water.

- EPA developed this tool with NH DES and stakeholder input including; plumbers, utility managers, health departments, low-income housing advocates.

- The tool can be used on a computer, tablet or phone. It is a step-by-step about how to identify a lead service line, as well as how to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water and test your drinking water.

- The guide is going to be launched early next year in New Hampshire. Even though it is currently specific for New Hampshire residents any one can use it.

- EPA will share the guide with other states if they're interested in customizing this tool for their own use.

- **WIIN Act Funding**

- The 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act) authorizes new funding opportunities for three grant programs, focusing on lead reduction. The three grant programs are as follows:

    a) Testing for lead in school and childcare centers (funds to states to run this program);
    b) Conducting lead service line inventories and/ or full lead service line replacements (funds to communities to run program); and
    c) Offering assistance to small and disadvantaged communities.

    Lead testing in school and childcare program will be the first of the three grant programs to be rolled out in 2019.

- **Some other tips for reducing lead**

    - **Promote Assessment & Transparency** - Water systems need to assess the make-up of their distribution system service line piping systems, specifically for, lead, brass, lead-line pipes, and lead goosenecks. This information should be made available to consumers through the internet or other methods. We strongly encourage those systems that have any pipe containing lead to remove the entire service line and do not conduct partial line replacements.

    - **Ensure Treatment Optimization** - In general, our waters are soft and corrosive which can lead to leaching of toxic metals like lead and copper from plumbing leading to public health concerns. Pipe corrosion also shortens the life span of our infrastructure. Many water systems in New England must maintain corrosion control treatment systems to minimize lead and copper leaching in water and to preserve the integrity of their infrastructure. Optimizing corrosion control treatment requires delicately

balancing source water chemistry, chemical dosing, distribution system hydraulics, and other system considerations. The New State agencies are working diligently to ensure all water systems have established water quality parameter goals and are meeting them. By doing so, we will have a higher degree of assurance that these systems are operating at the prescribed optimal conditions and environment.

- **Partnering to Protect** - Partnerships are crucial to leveraging resources and preventing lead in our drinking water. Region 1 continues to work closely with state agencies, water professional associations, including the Rural Water Associations and New England Water Works Association as well as federal partners such as HUD.

- **Emerging or Unregulated Contaminants**

- I noticed that PFAS is a topic that has popped up on your agenda this week.

- As you know, PFAS is a group of man-made chemicals that have been widely used in everyday products since the 1940s.

- The detection of PFAS compounds in groundwater and soil has raised concerns about the potential environmental and health risks.

- Across New England we have seen numerous sources of PFAS contamination: including firefighting and training areas, manufacturing facilities, landfills and more.

- New England states and New England communities are out in front on this issue. Our state partners deserve praise for their hard work, and our communities and community groups have had instrumental involvement and coordination with EPA and the states.

- In Region 1- we have been working closely to support the work our state partners are doing to address PFAS contamination.

- In June we held the first community engagement session on PFAS in the country. This was to help contribute to the national management plan, which is currently being drafted.

- This is an ever-evolving topic, and one that we should continue to work closely together on.

- **Aging infrastructure and SRF**

- It's no secret that there are a lot infrastructure projects that need to be done to maintain and update systems.

- While, funding is usually the question around projects like these, the government does have a variety of grants and low interest loans such as WIFIA and the SRF.

- **WIFIA**

- This year we invited the Narragansett Bay Commission to apply for $251 million Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan to make infrastructure improvements to control combined sewer overflows (CSOs).

- Established by the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014, the WIFIA program is a federal loan and guarantee program at EPA that aims to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure by providing long-term, low-cost supplemental credit assistance for regionally and nationally significant projects. EPA's WIFIA loans will allow large and small communities across the country to implement projects to address two national water priorities – providing for clean and safe drinking water including reducing exposure to lead and other contaminants and addressing aging water infrastructure.

- To date, EPA has issued four loans totaling over $1 billion in WIFIA credit assistance. Combined, these four projects will create over 5,000 jobs.

- **SRF**

- This past year, we announced that the State of Maine would receive a total of $23,531,000 in Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) grants to finance community-based water infrastructure projects, such as upgrades to municipal sewage plants and public drinking water systems.

- The total amount of funding came through separate grants to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in the amount of $12,424,000 for its Clean Water SRF program, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for $11,107,000 for its Drinking Water SRF program. With the funds awarded to the state, both the DEP and DHHS will fund a series of long- and short-term community-based projects that address high priority water quality and health based concerns.

- Under the Drinking Water SRF, states provide various types of assistance, including financing to improving drinking water treatment, fixing leaky or old pipes, improving source of water supply, and replacing or constructing finished water storage tanks. Clean Water SRF programs provide loans to construct municipal wastewater facilities, control nonpoint sources of pollution, build decentralized wastewater treatment systems, create green infrastructure projects and protect estuaries.

- DEP and DHHS oversee the engineering and construction aspects of the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF programs, respectively, as well as the individual projects funded by it, while the Maine Municipal Bond Bank is the financial manager of both funds.

- Some examples of SRF Funding being put to good use over the years include some projects in 2017-

- Like the water treatment upgrade and water main replacement at the Bangor Water District.

- Or the pump station upgrade at the Kennebec Water District worth $3 million.

- Or the Presque Isle water main replacement worth $1.6 million.

- Then a series of other projects around the state.

- Conclusion

- We have a lot of work to do, and we depend on operators and water distributers on the ground to meet standards, get customers clean safe drinking water, and manage wastewater and wastewater treatment appropriately.

- It's a tough job.

- I hope your meetings this week were productive, and you are learning best management practices from each other.

- I thank you very much for having me here today.